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TAGS: [KMDR JO](#)
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON IRAQ, TSUNAMI AND THE
MIDDLE EAST

Summary

-- Lead stories in all papers today, January 4, highlight a variety of domestic, regional and international issues. On the regional front, reports focus on the Iraqi elections and the Iraqi Defense Minister's remarks "not ruling out" their postponement. Reports also highlight the "beginnings of unrest" among the Israeli settlers as Israel's withdrawal nears. Stories continue to report on the aftermath of the Asian tsunami.

Editorial Commentary

-- "The Israelis are threatening unrest"

Center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour editorial comments (01/04): "Now it becomes apparent why Sharon had devised the unilateral plan to withdraw from Gaza Strip. He wanted to present the withdrawal as a pure Israeli measure agreed upon by the Israelis for the higher good and benefit, and not as a measure that would otherwise indicate a peace agreement with the Palestinians or the implementation of the roadmap that was formulated by the United States in agreement with the European Union, Russia and the United Nations.. Listening to statements made by Israeli settlements heads of counsels shows the depth of their rejection and their readiness to wage a real battle against the withdrawal plan.. This crisis, which is threatening serious divisions, is happening when the main purpose is actually to achieve Israel's security and get rid of the burden of its presence in the Gaza Strip. Imagine if the situation had to do with West Bank settlements or even establishing an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as the capital; a civil war would very much be possible.. All this is because of the political overbidding that took place in Israel in recent years, allowing politicians to achieve their popularity at the expense of Israel's real chance for establishing peace with the Palestinians and the entire Arab world. We do not know and we do not care about the cost that the Israeli government is going to end up paying in return for altering impressions formed among the people of this region and the world with regard to the Israelis readiness or eligibility for making peace. We do care however that the international community would realize the lie in claiming that the Palestinians are the ones who are obstructing peace."

-- "The Arabs did not collect donations!"

Chief editor Taher Udwan writes on the back page of independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm (01/04): "The majority of victims that fell in the Sumatra earthquake are Muslims . and yet there were no calls from mosques, civil society institutions or charity organizations in the Arab countries asking for donations for these victims.. On the contrary, we heard some speakers take advantage of this disaster and channel it towards being redemption and celestial anger, as if those poor people of Asia have been preoccupied with living a life of sin! Of course some Arab governments organized assistance, such as the Jordanian government.. But this is not enough. The Arab reaction was deficient and inadequate to the scale of the humanitarian disaster that befell Asian people very close to Arabs and to Islam. This deficiency shows to a large extent the damage inflicted upon the Muslim charity organizations in the Arab countries that suffered from extensive pressure and pursuits by the U.S. administration after the 9/11 attacks, leading to the closure of well-known organizations that were involved in international assistance.. On the other hand, the frozen status of Arab communities and the absence of any role for the civil society institutions in them create a state of apathy and indifference, leading in turn to the

proliferation of explanations that portray the victims of disasters as being punished."

-- "What a shame"

Columnist Nahed Hattar writes on the op-ed page of independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm (01/04): "Ever since April 2003, we had been imploring the Jordanian government to envision the Iraqi situation and not to slip into a piecemeal view its policies vis--vis Iraq and not to follow in the footsteps of the Americans without seeing the road ahead. We had said that Jordan's strategic interest lies in not acknowledging the political formations that were and are being established by the American occupation in Iraq.. We said and continue to say that the Iraqi resistance is rooted, escalating and organized, that it cannot be squashed and that there is no political solution without its involvement. We had requested so many times that lines of communication be open with the resisters, particularly with the major force behind the Iraqi resistance, namely Al-Baath party, and that political coordination with Jordan's traditional allies in Iraq continue, in order to safeguard Jordan's strategic interests in Iraq. The Americans marched from one formula to another and from one failure to another, and the Jordanian government followed in their footsteps until it has finally hit a wall.. The Jordanian government could have had great influence in Iraq had it not followed the Americans, had it presented independent initiatives, had it provided assistance and moral support to the Iraqi people, and had it opened communications with the Baathists, the Islamists, etc. But it did not. It did not even condemn the mass extermination operations against the people of Fallujah at the hands of the occupation and its temporary government."

HALE